2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

133 the triangle of mountains bounded on the north by the Dessie-Debra Tabor
[491] road; on the west by the canyon of the Blue Nile; on the east by the Strada Imperiale; and on the south by the Debra Markos-Addis Ababa road. Here
[132] Ras Kassa's Shoan fief of Salale adjoins his territories in Amhara Saint. Salale is a great grassy upland, in May already swept by rain storms for six or
[346] eight hours a day. The road to Addis Ababa passes through Ras Kassa's
[231] capital of Fiche, which has the usual character of Abyssinian country towns: an agglomeration of huts standing in rather dreary eucalyptus groves and dominated by a fort and the European villa of the Ras. Salale has the reputation of being the best horse-raising country in Abyssinia.

175 Fiche has a certain strategic importance in the feudal politics of Abyssinia since it lies across the main line of communication between the capital and Gojjam; and in the period of *coup d'état* in the '20s the lord of Salale was always in the position to intervene suddenly in the capital only 70 miles away.

Ras Kassa has always maintained his loyalty to the Makonnen house. He is a magnificent old veteran of war and politics, rugged and erect in spite of his advanced years. Ras Kassa's two elder sons, who had come in to discuss a truce with the Italians some months after the fall of Addis Ababa in 1936, were executed under circumstances of abominable treachery. Nevertheless the old Ras made himself responsible for the escort of the Agibar prisoners over about 150 miles of country without a single one of them coming to any harm.

I was fortunate in June and July in spending some time in Dessie and in making my way up to the Debra Tabor district where, in mid-July, the
[103] Italian garrison of some six thousand men surrendered. Dessie, which means "my joy" in Amharic, is an ideal base from which to study the incomparably
[632] beautiful country round. The former capital of Ras Michael, the Moslem father of the ex-Emperor Lij Iyasu, Dessie became the northern military headquarters of the Empire during the years preceding the Italian conquest. Dessie was favourably situated in relation to the Italian frontier in southern Eritrea, but it owed its strategic importance to the inner political situation. To the east and north-east along the line of the Eastern Escarpment overlooking the Danakil Depression and the Red Sea basin is the country of the turbulent Wagara Gallas who were, and who remain, a recurrent threat to
[563] internal security. The Wagara clans in fact lie athwart the main south-north route from Addis Ababa to Aduwa and the new and hardly less important motor road down the Escarpment and across the Danakil desert to Assab. During the years 1929-31, each autumn after the Great Rains, the Emperor had not less than thirty thousand men in the field engaged in more or less fruitless marches and counter-marches over the highlands of the Wagara country.

Scarcely less formidable were the great conservative lords of the north:
[578] Ras Gugsa of Makale, who afterwards went over to the Italians; Ras Seyum of Tigrai, ruling all the country between the upper Takkaze and the Eritrean
[635] border; and Ras Gugsa Wolye of Debra Tabor, an ex-husband of the Empress Zawditu, who himself had pretensions to the throne and the support
[662] of the powerful centre of the Coptic priesthood in Aduwa.

The last great feudal campaign in Ethiopia took place in 1931. The Im-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

priests and monks celebrated mass and prayed in every direction. But the ritualistic and ascetic aspects of Ethiopian Christianity did not monopolize the attention of Gondar, for they were balanced by the sensuous leisure that prevailed in the city. Gondar could be, as European travelers found it before the middle of the nineteenth century, "a town of pleasures" and of "boundless debauchery."[43]

A preoccupation with the symbols of the religious tradition, however, was quite consistent with a less than puritanical atmosphere. This—the work of teachers, students, painters, copyists—represented the genius of Gondar's cultural activity. Generation after generation traversed the mountainous highlands to reach this mecca of learning. Painters were drawn or formed there in such numbers that a special section of the city, the "picture market," was reserved for the sale of parchment and pigments. Under such circumstances the prestige of the literatus was bound to affect the common culture.

Gondarēs have traditionally been eager to send their children to the church schools. An unusually high percentage of people is said to have learned to read the *Dāwit* (Psalms of David, the final step in the traditional elementary curriculum) in and around Gondar than in any other part of Ethiopia. The Gondarēs have been notoriously proud of their literary and general cultural level. Indeed, they claim to speak the purest and most elegant Amharic in the land. The stability and number of Gondar's religious institutions permitted religious culture to flourish there. This gave the Gondarē occasion to become especially proficient in the religio-literary virtues as they were defined in Amhara culture.

Manz versus Gondar

As church and army were among the chief institutional developments of Abyssinia, so religious culture and military culture were among the chief products of the Amhara-Tigre spirit. Both aspects of its culture were important all over Abysinia throughout its history, but in Gondar and Manz, respectively, they underwent a more specialized development.

Gondar grew as a center for religious culture because the materials necessary for such a growth were concentrated in one place over a long period of time. The abundance of churches, masters, and pupils created a dense climate in which religious dance, painting, poetry, and textual studies flourished. Such innovation as the traditions permitted was encouraged by the coming of clergy to Gondar from all parts of the country.

The city failed as a military and political center because only a mobile capital could control the distant regions of Ethiopia and because, as Trimingham observes, "a fixed capital enabled court intrigue to thrive more insidiously [so that] coups d'état and the killing or imprisoning of monarchs became the rule."[44] Gondar's political integrity was weakened, moreover, by the in-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

565 63 66 taxes collected in the name of the emperor. Concerning the imposts for which the peasants were liable, Plowden wrote in 1844:

[651] They pay a certain portion in kind to the Ras, or other great chief, and sometimes a regular tax in money; besides this, they must furnish oxen to plough the king's lands. Their immediate governor then takes his share in kind of every grain (say a fifth), and feeds besides a certain number of soldiers at the expense of each householder: he has rights to oxen, sheep, goats, butter, honey, and every other requisite for subsistence; he must be received with joy and feasting by his subjects whenever he visits them, and can demand from them contributions on fifty pretexts—he is going on a campaign, or has just returned from one; he has lost a horse, or married a wife; his property has been consumed by fire, or he has lost his all in battle; or the sacred duty of a funeral banquet cannot be fulfilled without their aid.[80]

Two centuries earlier, observing similar phenomena, Almeida had concluded that "generally speaking, they are all plunderers rather than governors."[81] The only restraints on their exploitative behavior have been an occasionally keen sense of Christian propriety and the limits to what an exasperated local populace will bear.

565 The existence of a predatory class who serve military functions and maintain a gentry subculture is a common enough feature of traditional agrarian societies. What is perhaps less common in the Abyssinian case is the constellation of factors relating to the recruitment of members into this elite.

High secular status in Abyssinia was dependent on a complex of possessions—land, political strength, and honorific titles—which tended to reinforce [423] one another. The possession of much land has always been a basis for considerable deference in Abyssinia. As a source of produce, rents, and revenues [556] deflected from the Crown, moreover, it was also a source of wealth to be used [662] in building up one's political strength by rewarding able soldiers and loyal [661] followers, and by making gifts to one's superiors. Political power was directly obtained through the acquisition of governorships. Such offices were a further [631] basis for much deference and, through the incumbent's access to tribute, customs fees, court fees, and gifts from his subjects, of much income as well. [554] Titles, finally, not only were universally esteemed but also entitled the bearers to a style of life which included a presumptive right to gifts and obedience from all inferiors as well as the consumption of much wealth and power.

565 643 For all these possessions, the Abyssinian noble was directly dependent on his king (or, in the case of a lesser noble, on his overlord). His dependence was twofold: land, political office, and titles came to him as gifts from the sovereign, and, what is more, their continued possession was contingent on the sovereign's continuing favor. Abyssinian "vassals" had no legal rights to [423] their "benefices," and lands granted them could be withdrawn and given to others as the emperor wished. At the death of a feudal beneficiary his lands

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

178 So long as they remain loyal, the Emperor has tended to let members of the
566 new nobility help themselves to the spoils of office. Some of them retain the
66 view that public office is a private possession, a reward from the emperor rather than an obligation to the nation or people, and that it is, therefore, appropriate to use governmental position primarily to help one's relatives, inflate one's ego, and multiply one's wealth.

178 For the new nobility, however, wealth is no longer measured primarily in
565 terms of land and cattle, but of money. If they own land, it is of interest chiefly
556 as a source of income, and they tend to prefer using it for cash crops like
[241] coffee and *chat* (a narcotic plant sold in quantities to Arabs) than for the
[455] traditional grains and pulse or for experimental crops. They prefer to speculate in real estate rather than to increase the output of their farmlands. Indeed, because of the heightened prestige of money, many officials have been grateful—or would be grateful—for the opportunity to leave government service and become entrepreneurs. They feel very close to that small number of Ethiopians outside the government who have acquired much wealth through commercial enterprise, and who may also be included in the status group of the new nobility.

178 Commercial entrepreneurs came into prominence on the Ethiopian scene
565 in the 1920's, when monopolies in alcohol, matches, salt, and tobacco, as well
556 as trade in coffee and skins, enabled a small number of Ethiopian families,
472 Christian as well as Muslim, to accumulate wealth. Such people became
[175] prisoners of their wealth during the occupation, since they felt obliged to
[648] collaborate with the Italians in order to protect their privileges. Many more Ethiopians have profited from the modest economic activity in the country since the liberation, although most of Ethiopia's trade remains in the hands of Arabs, Greeks, and Armenians (at least nominally). Their social level approximates that of the higher government officials. They are expected to pay their respects at court along with the *makuännent* and *bäla-seltän*. They
[662] are often related to high government officials, and attempt to make use of their relatives in office to help them secure commercial advantages. Above all, they share the same style of life.

178 As an urban group, the new nobility enjoy a style of life notably different
565 from that of their predecessors who lived on mountainous estates and in army
369 tents. Even if assigned to provincial posts, members of the new nobility tend
177 to maintain homes in Addis Ababa. They have been quick to incorporate the
[556] more conventional urban Western forms of conspicuous consumption. Automobiles and chauffeurs, expensive European clothes, modern houses, Scotch whiskey, and Western-style banquets and dances have become the common ingredients of their subculture.

178 At the same time, traditional symbols of prestige are still in evidence. The
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11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

program not supervised by the Emperor, since any official's budding projects tend to be undone by his successor, whether because of personal vendetta, orders from the Emperor himself, or simply difference of approach. Thus has Haile Selassie been able to make sure that no one besides himself demonstrates any sort of leadership that might be attractive to the public.

At the same time his appointments have been made in such a way as to insure a balance of power—or impotence—favorable to his absolute control. By consistently appointing enemies to adjacent positions he has built in checks upon the behavior and sentiments of his higher officials. He has relied on mutual jealousies and conflicting ambitions to cause each to report anything incriminating he can find on the other. When appointees in the same branch of government have shown undue co-operation and friendliness, he has at times provoked friction between them.

In addition to the checks and balances of the *shum-shir* system, the Emperor has made use of an extensive intelligence system to keep watch over those in office and out. Not only the operations of the regular security departments of the Ministry of Interior and the police, but also some of his closer advisers have had their own personal networks, financed by moneys diverted from various government departments.

Other measures have been used to check the independence of businessmen. Money has been arbitrarily taken from them by the imposition of fines, confiscation of property, and through requests for contributions for charitable causes. A few private entrepreneurs who have been too successful have been forced into government service. Licenses have been revoked, in some cases given to foreigners rather than to prosperous Ethiopians. Dividends from commercial enterprises have been withheld, or given to others whom the Emperor favored. (Rather than appear unduly wealthy, some Ethiopian investors have preferred to use Greeks, Armenians, and Arabs as the nominal heads of their enterprises.)

Due to their relative proximity to the Emperor, their patronage powers, their wealth, and in some cases their family background, the members of the new nobility command considerable deference, particularly in Addis Ababa. Their Westernized style of life (itself modeled to a great extent on the Emperor's habits) has set new standards for modernizing Ethiopia. At the same time they are the objects of much stereotyped hostility. The people in the country, and the commoners of the towns, regard them as oppressive and unsympathetic. Their logic often runs: "The big men around the court are no good; only the Emperor is for us." The intellectuals see them as reactionary, selfish, and corrupt. The massacre of some fifteen members of the new nobility as the final act of the abortive coup d'état in 1960 was an expression of this latter judgment.

The chief advantage of the new nobility—their relative enjoyment of im-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

perial favor—has also been their great dilemma. Those who have been conscientious in seeking to carry out their proper responsibilities have been torn by the need to do what they regard as improper in order not to incur the disfavor of the sovereign. Those with narrowly opportunistic motives have been rendered no less uneasy by the need to counter the offensives of their enemies at court.

This dilemma and the related "immorality" is a natural consequence of Ethiopia's attempt to begin modernization under a traditional despotic authority. The behavior of the new nobility that is so bitterly attacked by the intellectuals will continue to reproduce itself until the process of modernization renders it obsolete—until the specialized standards which control economic and governmental activities have been firmly institutionalized, with controls that operate independent of expressions of loyalty to the sovereign.

Standards of competence have been more firmly institutionalized in the case of a special group among the new men of power—members of the military profession. The officers corps should in fact be considered as an elite group in its own right, in view of its distinct status and functions as well as the size and political importance of Ethiopia's security forces. The regular armed forces number nearly thirty thousand; there are also an estimated twenty thousand men in the police force and an unknown number in the recently reactivated territorial armies. The number of men with the rank of major or equivalent and above is thus probably close to a thousand.

Ethiopian military officers are recipients of the special esteem their countrymen have always felt toward men of war. They have also acquired prestige from the military's efforts to defend and liberate the country during the Italian period and more recently for their backstopping of Ethiopia's claims on the Somali border. They have at the same time been objects of an undercurrent of civilian hostility, based on the feeling that they are "parasites" and doing nothing positive to enrich the country. Their style of life lends itself readily to provoking the latter sort of objection. While dissatisfaction over income on the part of non-commissioned military personnel has been a major source of tension in Ethiopia during the past decade, the perquisites of higher officers compare quite favorably with those of their civilian counterparts. They have been given substantial salaries—and in addition, free housing, free cars, and servants and retainers drawn from the rank and file. Keeping in mind his particular need to insure the loyalty of the military elite, the Emperor has furthermore presented personal gifts to individual officers directly from time to time.

As a result of intimate contact with European and American personnel who have trained them in Ethiopia, experience abroad as trainees or in United Nations military missions, and the emphasis on rationalization inherent in the modern military profession, members of the military elite tend to be